

March 5, 2013



Iowa – 63
Illinois – 55

An interview with:

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY

THE MODERATOR: Questions for coach.

Q. You've been sticking with Josh for a long time. Rewarded at key times.

COACH McCAFFERY: Every time he shoots it, I think it's going in. I think he does, too. I asked him at halftime, I said, how did they feel? He said, they felt good. I said, just keep shooting and we'll keep coming to you.

I thought he moved well. He always does. He's terrific. He was using his shot fake. He was really crafty with those last two shots he got off.

Q. How about the way your players rushed him after the timeout, they were all so happy for him?

COACH McCAFFERY: Everybody knows he's struggling. They see him working hard, see him coming in and getting extra work in, seeing what he does in practice. When I tell you he kills it in practice, he absolutely kills it.

It's just a matter of time. He's done it this year in games. He just hasn't done it as much as he would like or as we thought.

But a lot of times when you have shooters, if they're not shooting well, you've got to get them out. With Josh, he plays terrific defense. He's always in the right place. He knows different positions on the floor. He can feed the post. He doesn't turn the ball over. He's got size. So he can be out there and be effective.

Even if he's not shooting, they chase him around all over the place knowing that at any point

in time he can do exactly what he just did. That's a weapon.

Q. How much is the offense designed to give him open looks?

COACH McCAFFERY: It really depends what we're running. Sometimes we'll run something specifically for him. Sometimes we'll run motion and try to free him up in the framework of everything else we're doing.

He's got a real good sense of how to get open, how they're playing him. He went through that in high school. Sometimes they're going to lock into his hip, play him on one side, try to take him to the other side. They'll play directly behind him. They'll top block him, make him go under everything. He's seen it all. Sometimes they'll switch out on him. Then we have to be able to hit the slip guy. We did that a couple times today.

Q. Talk about the blocked shots.

COACH McCAFFERY: I thought John did a good job. He was swinging the ball to the corner and driving from there. That's tough action to guard. Fortunately we had Gabe back there tonight. He was sort of taking care of business for us.

Q. Looked like Marble had no hesitation to get Oglesby the ball in those situations. Is there something you can amplify to that?

COACH McCAFFERY: No. I think it's an accurate assessment. Dev is a very good point guard. He's going to load up our shooters, give it up on the break, feed the post, recognize switching.

We felt like Josh could get some shots in that situation. We had a lead, run the clock, shoot it towards the end of the clock. We were successful doing that.

Q. After the game you seemed to have an emotional moment with Josh. What did you say to him there?

COACH McCAFFERY: If you know Josh, he's a phenomenally likable person. He's tried so hard to do what he did tonight all the time. It would be different if he wasn't putting the time in, if he wasn't a great teammate.

That's why you saw me hugging him. The team really reacted to him one timeout. I think somebody pointed that out already.

Q. How important was it for him to have a night like this when he was struggling early on?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that's the key. He had some really good looks early. We were going to him early. The one didn't look like it was going to go in, but the other three looked like they were going in. He felt good about it. I felt like we'll keep going to him, he's going to make them, and he did.

Q. Dev did a good job of controlling the tempo. Do you like the way he runs the offense?

COACH McCAFFERY: I do. I thought tonight in particular he was especially good. He had a great tempo to his game, a real understanding of time and score in terms of engineering victory, getting us home.

But I thought he played with great energy level. I played him 34 minutes. There was a stretch in the second half where I wasn't sure I wanted to take him out. But I felt like there was going to be a lot of pressure on him in the last six or seven minutes so I took him out for a couple minutes. We were still able to maintain the lead. He was strong for the finish. That was good.

Q. Defense was historic early on. Illinois had been averaging 70 points a game.

COACH McCAFFERY: The defense was spectacular early, you're right. What did they shoot in the first half, 26%. A little disturbing that we hold them to 26% and we're up 3. Again, we had a similar half that we had the other night at Indiana where we turned it over in the first half, which is very uncharacteristic of our team, but settled down in the second half, did what we needed to do.

Q. There was a couple times where Indiana got it to a one-possession game. What

did you see in the poise of your team tonight and how much they've grown?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, we didn't turn it over. We got good shots at the basket. We were driving the ball. You need to be in the bonus and you need to get to the double bonus in that situation.

Case in point, Zach misses the front end but makes the back end, gives us a three-possession lead. It's so much better to go up to that line with two knowing you're going to have the other one if you miss the first one.

In terms of managing the game that way, very good job, very important that we do that.

Q. You talked about how your defense kept you in games, where last year you would have gotten blown out.

COACH McCAFFERY: We shot 28% in the second half, and we won by 8. I think you're absolutely right. Our defense in both halves was what it needed to be for us to win.

Last year we would have lost 77-63 if we shot 28% in the second half, played the defense the way we played last year. So it's showing you the team has really grown and we're obviously much deeper. There's a lot of different ways I can go when I go to my bench.

Q. Talk about the specific defensive play where you pushed their penetration underneath the basket. They attacked multiple times.

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I wish I could tell you there was something ingenious that I came up with. The way they were running their offense, the thing you're always worried about with Illinois is their three-point shooters, especially when Griffey starts in the high post, he goes back in and pops it. You're in a zone but you got everybody up above the line essentially.

So we're matching the three-point shooters. I think that's when John started saying, Let's run some cutters through, drive it from there, we can potentially beat them to the rim. So it's incumbent then upon our posts to get over either in body-up or get over and block a shot.

Gabe's reaction was terrific. He went when he needed to. He was able to block shots without fouling. Then we picked up the loose balls after the blocked shots. I thought that was important, too.

Q. You got Woodbury going early.

COACH McCaffery: I thought Woody was terrific tonight. He made the mistake at the end. Even then, we were trapping the ball screen, he was moving his feet terrific. That's a freshman mistake. He'll learn from that. I thought Woody was great. You're right.

Thank you.

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